

Announces New Legislation and Release of 2010 Grants and Resources Manual on Conference Call

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WASHINGTON, DC— During a conference call announcing the release of the third edition of his one-of-a-kind grant and resource directory and announcing his support for HR 3007, the Local Fiscal Assistance Act, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) urged his colleagues to support a competitive grants process to distribute funding in place of the current appropriations system. David Ross, of the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Christopher Cap, the Deputy Executive Vice President for the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, joined Congressman Sestak to emphasize the need to provide fair access to resources for local projects.

The Congressman detailed new legislation he is submitting that would begin the shift from earmarks to competitive grants. His bill:

- Establishes a Commission on Earmark Reform to transition from member directed earmarks to a strictly grant making process.
- Creates a centralized Office of Grant Making at the Office of Management and Budget to implement the Commission's policy proposals and address identified weaknesses in the grant making process to support the transition away from earmarks.
- Streamlines federal agencies' grant making process to support the Office of Grant Making and the transition to grants.
- Expand use and functionality of Grants.gov

To help ensure a transparent grants process, the Congressman has published annually, and made available on his website, his 250 page-directory of federal, state and private grant and resource opportunities for local governments, individuals, and organizations.

"I support eliminating all earmarks from the appropriations process entirely and would do so in a heartbeat, instituting in its place a grant system that takes account of local input in Washington," said Congressman Sestak. "We should institute a process like the Homeland Security appropriations legislation, where instead of earmarking appropriation requests, Congress dedicates funding for competitive grants, like the FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grant program where fire companies from around the country submit projects that are then reviewed by other firefighters to determine which projects get funded.

"By eliminating earmarks we can ensure that political influence is removed from the process, and by enhancing the grant programs we can also ensure that local business, community, and

municipal leaders -- who understand better than Washington bureaucrats a number of specific needs and challenges of their communities -- have the proper input in allocating a certain proportion of federal funds within a fair and open, non-political grant process. Not only should the earmarking funds be moved into grants, but I feel strongly that the grants process should be made easier to access."

The Congressman noted that this would be one important step toward restoring public trust in our public institutions by removing special interest influence. In that vein, he also commented on today's Supreme Court decision to do away with long-standing rules limiting corporate spending on political campaigns. He said he disagreed with giving the same status to corporations as to individual citizens in society by removing decades-old precedents that protected the electoral process from the influence of money.

"As long as the appropriations process does exist, I will ensure a transparent and accountable system that gives my constituents a fair chance to access it," said the Congressman. "I have made sure each year to publish on my Web site and distribute to the media the details of all appropriations I helped secure, including who has gotten the funding and how much."

Furthermore, the Congressman employs a four-step review process to ensure that all appropriations requests that receive his support are worthwhile, responsible, and will be of significant value to the 7th District and the nation.

Congressman Sestak published the Directory after he found that there were few resources on the subject of federal funding assistance and most people were either unaware or confused about the process to access funding. The manual is a one-stop shop to learn about funding opportunities and provide a level playing field through equal access and information. Through his first year in office, Congressman Sestak met individually with leaders from nearly every municipality in his District and in January of 2008, he published the 1st Edition of the Pennsylvania 7th Congressional District Grant and Resource Directory-- the first known compilation developed by a Congressional office. He simultaneously held a series of informational meetings for municipal and county officials and one dedicated to first responders. Each year, he holds six seminars of over 100 people each who come to obtain better access to grants.

"I see this directory as critical to fulfilling two parts of my job," said Congressman Sestak. "First, as a representative, it is my responsibility to ensure that constituents have access to me and my staff and that I keep them abreast of my work in Washington. Second, I need to make certain that my constituents are aware of the resources available to them. I strive to fulfill this

objective by informing my constituents' representatives of the funding opportunities available to them; and, generating discussion between grant-seekers and providers.

In recognition of the need to provide resource assistance to local governments, Congressman Sestak also co-sponsored H.R. 3007, the Local Fiscal Assistance Act, which was introduced by Representative Paul Kanjorski. The legislation revives a federal program in place from 1972 to 1986 that directly appropriates federal funds to local governments. H.R. 3007 would provide much needed financial relief to local governments as they struggle to balance their budgets during this tough economic climate and in so doing reducing the need to lay off employees, cut back on services, and raise taxes at a time when such actions would be particularly harmful to the communities they serve.

"In these tough economic times, it is as important as ever for elected officials to be responsive to their constituents," said Congressman Sestak. "This includes local governments. That is why I happy to continue to provide updated editions of the resource directory, seminars for municipal leaders, and to have co-sponsored H.R. 3007."

The Pennsylvania 7th Congressional District Grants and Resource Directory will be made available during a series of meetings for municipal leaders, first responders, and individuals and organizations later this month and through Congressman Sestak's website, www.sestak.house.gov, where a searchable version is also available.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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